



# PRESS RELEASE

## House Armed Services Committee

### Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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### **SPENCE QUESTIONS UTILITY OF SOME COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION PROJECTS**

The General Accounting Office (GAO) today released a report concluding that U.S. efforts to reduce stockpiles of Russian nuclear and chemical weapons may cost hundreds of millions more and achieve far less than originally planned. The GAO report focused on two specific Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) funded construction projects in Russia – the nuclear material storage facility at Mayak and the chemical weapons destruction facility at Shchuch'ye.

The GAO report – *"Weapons of Mass Destruction: Effort to Reduce Russian Arsenals May Cost More, Achieve Less Than Planned"* (GAO/NSIAD-99-76) – concluded that the cost to the United States of funding the nuclear material storage facility at Mayak, Russia has already increased from original estimates of \$275 million to \$413 million and may ultimately exceed \$1 billion. Additionally, GAO found that construction of the facility will take three years longer to complete and will have only one-half of its originally planned storage capacity. GAO also concluded that Russia's "failure to promptly provide needed information about the chemical weapons to be destroyed" at Shchuch'ye is one of several factors that has delayed completion of the chemical weapons destruction facility project until 2006, placing at risk Russia's compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the "broader [U.S.] national security objectives of accelerating the destruction of such weapons at other depots."

"GAO's conclusion that 'Russia's funding shortfalls and reluctance to provide DOD with crucial information have hampered DOD's efforts and limited prospects for achieving all of these projects' intended benefits within expected time frames' is sobering," said Spence. "As the GAO report makes painfully clear, the fundamental assumptions underpinning these two projects have substantially changed in light of Russia's refusal to absorb its share of the costs necessary to see them to completion. Funding for these 'Cooperative Threat Reduction' programs seems to be becoming less 'cooperative' and more one-sided.

"As in previous years, I expect the committee to once again take a serious look at these two CTR projects this year," continued Spence. "The committee has always been troubled for several years by the Shchuch'ye project, which would destroy only a small fraction of Russia's total chemical weapons stockpile – a stockpile that poses more of an environmental problem to Russia than a national security threat to the United States.

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“In many instances, the CTR program has achieved positive results for U.S. security. However, given the significant budgetary pressures facing DOD today, I believe there may be other critical national security priorities, including higher priority CTR projects, that are likely to provide a greater return on investment,” concluded Spence.

The report was requested by Spence and Armed Services Committee Ranking Minority Member U.S. Rep. Ike Skelton.

The report is available on the GAO website at: <http://www.gao.gov>.

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